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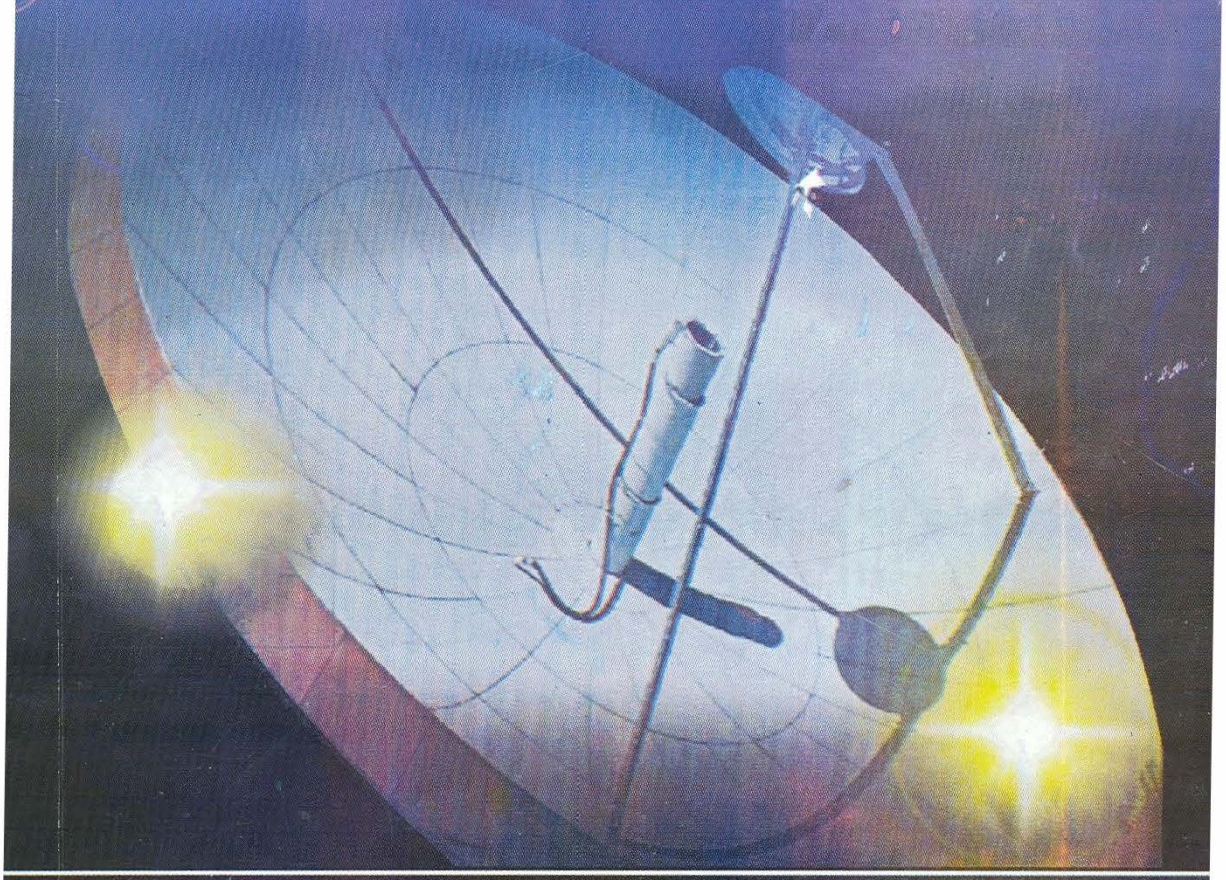

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DID TELEVISION MAKE YOU CHANGE YOUR CHOICE OF CANDIDATE?

By

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Abstract

Television is a very potent medium that can be used to reach millions of viewers at the same time. Because it combines sound and pictures together, its power seems multiplied. Due to these, many have chosen it as the choice medium to use to pass across messages to different people. Politicians have characteristically routed their messages through the channel that carries their messages to the largest number of people. In Nigeria, television has been enthusiastically used by politicians to reach members of the electorate. Their main reason is to capture the votes of these citizens through convincing messages and spots. Most of the voters may not know those contesting on a one-to-one basis. However, television broadcasts bring unending images and messages from the contestants to the voters in their different homes. Some of the voters may have made up their minds on the particular contestant that they wanted to vote for before or even after exposure to television broadcasts. Focussing on voters in Ado Odo/Ota communities, this paper sought to establish if television broadcasts influenced these voters into changing their minds from their initial candidates of preference to another because of what they watched on television during the 2007 Nigerian presidential election. It was found that indeed television caused voters' shift from one candidate to another. Importantly, this shift was more pronounced in the urban than in the rural areas. Most of the voters that changed their minds were the undecided voters who were still wavering between opinions on whom to vote for. Nevertheless, most of the voters, especially the older ones remained resolute in their decisions to vote for their candidates of choice.

Introduction

Nigeria marched into the Fourth Republic on May 29, 2007. Before this time, the nation had conducted elections. Elections are important features in democracy. Through it, aspirants to public offices are voted in. Candidates with the intention of occupying such offices generally attempt to use the mass media, especially television, to maximize their chances of winning at the polls. Thus it can be seen that television has been employed by politicians and their media strategists to lure more voters to cast their votes in their favour.

Baran (2004, p. 450) remarks that television is the first source of public affairs information. In democratic nations, the electorate watch television to get news and information on the government and elections. Specifically in the US, Beck, Dalton, Greene and Huckfeldt (2002, p. 57-73) and Chaffee, Zhao and Leshner (1994, pp. 305-324) remark that

television is the major source of information on modern campaigns. Bittner (1989, pp. 258) attributes television's awesome popularity to its ability to combine sight and sound. According to him, most people spend more time watching television than they do on other media types.

Television is a most important channel of communication and has been used to cover different political processes like major political events, campaigns and elections. Time and again, it has provided a direct link between the politicians and the electorate. Because of its visual impact, politicians have used it to reach millions of voters during electoral periods. The excellent use of television may affect what voters do at the polling booths. Since most of them get their information from television it follows that the information that television gives may catch the attention of voters to participate more in the electoral processes or make them more apathetic. Television can attract and even hold public attention by what it chooses to or not to present to viewers. In this way, television can be employed to influence the decisions of those that vote: either to vote for or against an individual.

It is against this background that this study examined if television broadcasts influenced voters in Ado Odo/Ota during the 2007 Nigerian presidential election into deserting their earlier decisions to vote for their initial candidates of choice and swinging to other candidates that are different from those that they made up their minds to vote for after watching telebroadcasts. These new candidates were not their first choices. In other words, did these voters change their minds on the candidates that they initially wanted to vote for in the presidential elections after watching television broadcasts?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this paper is based on the agenda-setting theory of the media which came out of the publication of two journalism professors of University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. In the popular Chapel Hill Study, McCombs and Shaw (1972, p. 177) establish that the mass media can influence the audiences in ways only previously speculated. Using a content analytical method, they measured the newspapers, magazines and television newscasts during the United States of America 1968 Presidential election. The *media agenda* or what the media thought were important was determined by the prominence of the news stories of the moment- their length and position. The *public agenda*, the focus of public attention or what the public thought, discussed or worried about as important were determined by asking 100 undecided Chapel Hill voters exposed to a mix of newspapers, network television news, and news magazines to outline what each thought were the key

issues of the campaigns, irrespective of what the political candidates were saying. They discover that the media appear to exert considerable impact on voters' judgement of what they considered the major issues of the presidential campaign. In fact, there was a correlation of + .967 between the major issues emphasized during the campaigns and the voters' independent judgements of what they thought were important!

Griffin (2003, p. 392) listed the media agenda in order of importance as foreign policy, law and order, fiscal policy, public welfare and civil rights. The public agenda list was nearly identical. These authors found an almost perfect correlation of .97 between the media agenda and the public agenda. McCombs and Shaw tagged this occurrence "agenda setting", observing that "the mass media set the agenda for each political campaign by influencing the salience or of attitudes toward the political issues". McCombs and Shaw (1974) define agenda setting as the impact the mass media have in shaping cognitive changes in individuals by structuring their worlds. Indeed, what the public considered to be the most important issues of the day were being shaped by the mass media! However, they regard this as normal and inevitable in the flow of news. This makes McCombs and Shaw (1974) to assert that there is a positive relationship between what the media emphasize by the coverage given and what voters see as important.

Numerous studies like this have established the firm correlations between the media and the public priorities. Such studies include Dearing and Rogers (1996), Ghanem (1996), McCombs and Shaw (1993, pp. 58–67) and Weaver, Graber, McCombs and Eyal (1981). As Newbold, (1995, p. 121) correlates, the salience of an issue in the agenda will also be seen by the audience to be very important. Rogers and Dearing (1994, p. 91) equally stress that the media agenda have strong influence on top decision makers. Nonetheless, Walker (1977, pp. 423–445) and Wood and Peake (1998, pp. 173–183) assert that except for some uncommon and non-routine crisis situations, the media's political agenda setting impact is limited.

Since what is published by the media naturally gains more public attention and prominence, different researchers have battled to establish who sets the media agenda. Their findings are as varied as their authors. Breed (1955, pp. 326- 335) argues that the media agenda is set by the media publishers themselves while McCombs (1972) believes that economic considerations determines this important agenda. The trio of Siebert, Peterson and Schramm (1956) present the platform of the operating press philosophy as the chief determinant. Reston (1967) and Rivers (1970) counter with their suggestions of political constraints. McLoed and Hawley (1964, pp. 529-538) offer professional norms while

Shaw (1967, pp. 3-31) suggests technological means. McCombs (1972) hints that the interests of the media consumers are pointers and White (1950, pp. 383-390) concludes that the setters of the agenda are the newsmakers themselves!

In the light of classic agenda-setting studies, campaign scholars like Brandenburg (2002, pp. 34-54), Brandenburg (2004); Norris, Curtice, Sanders, Scammell, and Semetko (1999); Roberts and McCombs (1994, pp. 249-262); Semetko, Blumler, Gurevitch and Weaver (1991) and Van Aelst, (2004) started focusing attention on the relationship between the media and the political agenda to determine the extent media and political parties interact during the campaign and to answer the question of who sets the agenda: the political parties or the media

The agenda setting researchers believe that the media do not only tell the people what to do, but can and do tell people what to think about through the coverage the media give or refuse to give to events. McCombs (1994, p. 4) say this is possible because the mass media have the ability to transfer the salience of items on their news agenda to the public agenda. The media do this by assigning specific attributes to the potential objects of interests in the issues, events or persons. This means that if the media assign, ascribe or credit somebody or something with some qualities the media consumers equally credit that person or something as the media have so done. This explains why McCombs and Shaw (1974) remark that "we judge as important what the media judge as important". Thus, Cobb and Elder (1971, p. 909) comment that "the media can also play a very important role in elevating issues to the systemic agenda and increasing their chances of receiving consideration on institutional agendas." However, this does not mean that the media take deliberate steps to influence the reader, the viewer or the reader's opinion on the issues they are presenting. The canon of media objectivity demands that the media practitioners present all sides of a story for the consumers to make objective decisions.

Anaeto, Onabanjo and Osifeso (2008, p. 89) write on the three principles of this theory. The first is that the mass media, such as the press do not reflect social reality because news is filtered, chosen and shaped by the newsroom staff or broadcaster. The second is that people get their news from limited sources because people do not pay attention to all news outlets, but rather rely on the mass media for the news. The third is that the few media agenda which were chosen by the professional gatekeepers lead people to perceive the given issues as important. These authors (p. 89) agree that the agenda-setting theory proposes that the facts which the people get to know about issues of public concern tend to be those which

the mass media have presented to them. Similarly, the significance people ascribe to any issue is proportionate to the amount of attention given to the same issue in the media.

As Cohen (1963, p. 13) notes:

> The media may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about. And it follows from this that the world looks different to different people, depending not only on their personal interests, but also on the map that is drawn for them by the writers, editors and publishers of the papers that they read.

Events considered by the media to be important are given coverage. Even though the mass media may not always determine what we think about or what opinions to hold, however, they set the agenda for our discussions by telling us what to think about or hold opinions on. Media researchers have proved that the agenda of issues and of candidates' characteristics as emphasized by the media, most likely, end up as the voters' agenda as well.

McCombs and Shaw (1972, p. 176) argue that:

> In choosing and displaying news, editors, newsroom staff and broadcasters play an important part in shaping political reality.. Readers learn not only about a given issue, but how much importance to attach to that issue from the amount of information in a news story and its position.... The mass media may well determine the important issues - that is the media may set the agenda.

The media do not only inform but also influence us as to what they deem are important for us to know. Butler (1998, pp. 27–45) and Van Praag and Brants (1999, pp. 179–199) observe that the agenda setting power of journalists in election times lies more in their discretion to include or exclude information of political actors than in their autonomous selection of issues. This agrees with McLuhan's (1968, p. 204) remark that the press can even colour events by using them in particular ways, or even refusing to use the stories at all.

The elements involved in agenda-setting are four. Folarin (2002, p. 75) explains that they are the quantity or frequency of reporting; the prominence given to the reports through headline displays, pictures and layout in newspapers, magazines, film, graphics or timing on radio and television; the degree of conflict the reports generate and the cumulative specific media effects over time. As Kosicki (1993, p. 113) emphasizes, the *media gate keepers* do not only watch over which messages pass through or are weeded out from publication by shuffling information here and there, but that they actively construct messages to emphasize certain aspects of an issue and not others. The gate keepers include the

reporters, copy tasters, sub-editors, editors, media owners and even the government. Three things are responsible for agenda setting. These are the number of times an issue is reported in the mass media; the use of headlines and pictures to play up a report in the media; and reports that create room for *points* and *counter points*.

Barker and Kiebler (1971, pp. 193-205) suggest that the agenda-setting theory hinges on the premise that if the same people are exposed to the same media, they will place the same importance on the same issues. On the corollary, if people are not exposed to the same media reporting the same issues, they will not feel that the same issues are important. Thus the media create an agenda for our thoughts and affect what we decide are important. Bittner (1989, p. 382) remarks that the media coverage of issues at political campaigns may help us to perceive certain issues as being more important than others. These may consequently influence our decisions about the candidates, based on how they treat the issues. However, Eilders (1997), (2000, pp. 181-206) and (2001) states that for the media to have any strong impact on politics, three conditions must be met: a high congruence of the different media outlets, similarly focusing on the same issues, and persistently framing these issues. Wanta and Hu (1994, pp. 90–98) identify three attributes that influence how the media agenda-setting process works for people. These are: how much credibility the persons assign to the media; how much they rely on the news media for information and how exposed they are to the media messages. These agree with Miller and Krosnick's (2000, pp. 301–315) experiment that demonstrated that participants who both trust the media and know a lot about politics have the strongest effect of agenda setting. A high score on each of these factors is likely to expose the individuals to greater agenda-setting effects. These factors feed each other because high media credibility will lead to high media reliance and consequently high media exposure. Nevertheless, Bartels (1996) writes that for these news media outlets to have any impart, they must be reliable and respected; and not be marginal and dubious.

There is first and second levels of agenda-setting. The first level agenda-setting deals with the media and the public agenda resulting from the sheer volume of exposure. The second level agenda-setting examines the attributes - the properties, qualities, and characteristics - of these objects enumerated at the first-level by suggesting to the public what and how they should think through attribute agenda-setting and priming. Agenda-setting researchers like Ghanem, (1997, pp. 3–14), McCombs, Lopez-Escobar and Llamas (2000, pp. 77–92) and Takeshita (1997, pp. 15–27) call the second level of agenda setting attribute agenda setting. Second level agenda provides more detailed understanding of the messages by

drawing closer attention to the specific contents of mass media messages, including whether the message tone is positive or negative. Subsequent attitudes and opinions are formed from these details. (McCombs, n.d, pp. 14-15). Kiousis (2005, pp. 3-27) explores the relationship between media agenda of attributes, the perceived object salience and attitude strength on presidential candidates. Across five elections, he establishes that media salience of the attributes of the candidates is moderately linked to the perceived public's candidate salience, and the strong holding of non-neutral public attitude. This suggests that media attention to certain attributes, for example morality or leadership, may have more weight with the public than others in terms of increasing the salience of the candidates.

Method of Study

The method adopted in this study is survey research design. According to Nworgu (1991, pp. 50-51), a research design is the blueprint specifying how data relating to a given problem would be collected and analyzed. It is the procedural outline guiding the conduct of any study and it shows how the data to be used in the study would be collected and analyzed. The survey design conveniently lends itself to uses in studies involving large human samples and the aggregate of their views on an issue or problem. Its aim is to find out why they behave in a particular way and what their behaviour would be under a given condition. A group of people are studied by collecting and analyzing data from a few members of the group considered representative of the entire population. From these, the researcher draws a conclusion concerning the whole population. According to Ojo (2005, p. 52) the survey design makes it possible to study the sample and variables as they are, without the researcher making any attempt to control or manipulate them. This research method proved useful in determining the relationship between the variables in this study.

The Study Population

According to Ohaja (2003, p. 75) the "population for a study refers to all those persons who fall under the umbrella of the topic or that can be examined to address the research problem or meet the research objectives". Oredein (2004, p. 48) defines the population as "the members or elements in a given area: it might be human beings, animals, trees, objects or events of a well defined group and conforming to the limits within which the research findings are applicable". The population for this study comprised all the registered voters, in the 2007 Nigerian General Elections, residing in Ado-Odo/Ota Local Government. They were the

people who voted. They are Nigerians and they were above the age of 18 years at the time of the election.

Ado-Odo/Ota is one of the Local Councils in Ogun State. This local council was purposively selected because it is a unique society, exhibiting both the characteristics of the urbanized and rural communities. It is strategically located as the next door neighbour to metropolitan Lagos. Lagos is the nation's economic, commercial and industrial nerve-centre. Indeed, urbanization and city development are rapidly moving from Lagos to Ado-Odo/Ota Local Government Area. It is ethnically heterogeneous being home to all the major ethnic groups in Nigeria. Yet, the council still maintains some traditional characteristics peculiar to rural societies. Residents of Ado-Odo/Ota Local Government Area receive television signals from twelve television stations including Gateway Television, Abeokuta. Others are the Africa Independent Television (AIT), Alagbado; Nigerian Television Authority (NTA), Tejuosho and Victoria Island; Galaxy, Channels, Silverbird, Muri Television (MITV), Degue Broadcasting Network (DBN), Lagos State Television/Lagos Weekend Television all located in Lagos.

This Council houses two constituencies, Constituencies I and II. Both have eight wards or Registration Areas each. Attention was focused on both constituencies. The population of this study are the 187,391 registered voters in these constituencies.

Sampling Procedure And Sample Size

Sampling procedure is the method or procedure used in drawing or selecting the voters from the wards for the study. Wimmer and Dominick (2003, p. 88) remark that the sampling procedure is the scheme used to select respondents. The sampling technique used is the random probability sampling technique. It guarantees every element of the population an equal and independent chance of being included in the sample drawn randomly. It follows that if all the elements in the population have an equal chance of being selected, there is an excellent chance that the resultant sample is a close representation of the whole population. The probability approach ensured that every voter had an equal chance of selection. Thus, voters were picked from Constituencies I and II at random without any element being given any priority.

The sampling procedure used was the multi-stage cluster sampling technique. The voters were already grouped or divided into different clusters or wards based on the geographical location of their wards. Altogether there were 16 such clusters. Six of these wards were picked - three from each constituency. For Constituency 1, the Ota 1, Sango and Iju wards were chosen. For Constituency II, Ado-Odo II, Ketu/Adie-Owe

and Agbara II were chosen. Each of these wards have polling stations under them. The systematic sampling was used to select the various polling units. Five percent of the registered numbers of voters from these wards were sampled on the assumption that they would provide a large enough sample for meaningful analysis. Thus 3,635 voters were selected for the study. The individual respondents were picked from the households. The primary instrument for data collection was a questionnaire. Sobowale (2008, p. 27) points out the usefulness of this instrument to include the maintenance of standard questions that ensure that the interviewer(s) ask the same questions which in turn provide uniform answers from the respondents and finally facilitate data processing because coding is made easier.

Data Presentation and Interpretation

Below are the quantitative data generated from the responses of the respondents to the different items in the questionnaire that dealt with television broadcasts changing/not changing voters' choices on the initially preferred candidates.

TABLE 1: whether respondents' have already made up minds on whom to vote for before watching television

RESPONSE	PERCENT
YES	61.4
NO	36.7
DON'T KNOW	2.0
TOTAL =	**100**
n =	**3,064**

From Table 1 above, it can be seen that most of the respondents had already made up their minds on who they wanted to vote in as the president during the last election even before watching televised programmes on elections. This shows that almost two-thirds of the respondents had already made up their minds on the candidates that they wanted to vote for in the election even before any exposure to television broadcasts on the presidential election.

Table 2: whether television broadcasts led to change of candidate voted for

RESPONSE	PERCENT
YES	33.4
NO	64.6
DON'T KNOW	2.0
TOTAL	**= 100**
n	**= 3,064**

Table 2 explains that about one-third of the respondents changed their minds about who they voted for in the election after watching electoral programmes on television. On the other hand, the rest said that they did not change their minds. It can be inferred that most of the respondents did not change their minds from the candidates that they initially determined to vote for irrespective of what they saw on television. They did not waiver from their original decisions, which placed them out of reach of conversion attempts. Secondly, many of the voters were not open to conversion as they had already made up their minds on their voting intentions due to ties to political parties, social influences or family pressures.

Table 3: Television Broadcasts Influenced Candidate Change

RESPONSE	PERCENT
STRONGLY AGREE	17.5
AGREE	23.8
STRONGLY DISAGREE	23.8
DISAGREE	28.5
DON'T KNOW	6.4
TOTAL	**= 100.0**
n	**= 3,064**

Did what voters watch on television on the elections make them change their minds to vote for particular candidates that they initially did not want to vote for? Table 3 give the details that 41.3% of the respondents agreed that what television showed them about the elections made them

change their minds to vote for particular candidates. But 52.3% of the respondents disagreed that television made them to switch their votes to particular candidates. This means that more than half of the respondents believed that what they watched on television made them not to change their minds to vote for particular candidates. This means that despite of all that television showed about the candidates -either positive or negative- the respondents did not change their minds.

Therefore, it might be advisable for political strategists to use television in areas where there is pronounced support for their parties to reinforce their party faithful opinions. It may also be wise to employ television in areas where the voters do not have strong feelings of partisanship to other political parties or a wavering between opinions in other to swing over their votes.

Table 4: television broadcasts caused respondents' change of mind to vote for specific candidates

RESPONSE	**PERCENT**
STRONGLY AGREE	16.7
AGREE	22.4
STRONGLY DISAGREE	25.1
DISAGREE	29.8
DON'T KNOW	6.0
TOTAL =	**100.0**
n =	**3,064**

Table 4 indicates that 39.1% of the respondents confirmed that television made them to change their minds into voting for specific candidates. These candidates were not the initial choices. However, their appearances on television boosted their ratings and impressed the watching respondents enough to sway to vote for them. The candidates that they changed to vote for were not their initial choices, but they felt that these candidates were better choices because of what television showed about them! The voters who changed their minds based on what

they watched on television apparently did so because of new insights arising from these television broadcasts.

Nevertheless, 54.9% respondents did not agree that television made them to change their votes for specific candidates.

In other words, the data from this Table reveals that television broadcasts made four out of every ten voters to change their minds from their initial choices to vote for other specific candidates. These specific candidates were not the ones that they initially wanted to vote for. They may have changed their minds because of the information that television provided. However, the rest of the voters did not allow television to make them to change their minds. Political office contestants may therefore deploy television with effectively tailored messages to modify some voters' outlook to their favour as well as attempt to change the positions of those who are not in their support. This means that television remains a veritable channel of communication to reach members of the electorate.

Table 5: television contents caused change of mind from Voting for specific candidates

RESPONSE	PERCENT
STRONGLY AGREE	17.0
AGREE	27.4
STRONGLY DISAGREE	21.2
DISAGREE	27.0
DON'T KNOW	7.4
TOTAL = 100.0 **N = 3,064**	

Some respondents confirmed that what the same television showed them turned them away, thereafter, from voting for some specific other candidates that they might have earlier considered voting for or previously made up their minds to vote for from the beginning. Table 5 reveals that 44.4% of the respondents agreed that what they saw on television made them to change their minds from voting for a specific candidate, probably

because television cast negative images of these candidates. Kennamer and Chafee (1982, pp. 627-650) claim that the voters with greater interests and those who pay more attention to the media learn more about the political candidates. In consequent, they begin to develop preferences for specific candidates. Apparently, their increased interests in knowing more about the candidates led to greater television exposure. It is not surprising that they therefore changed their decisions.

However 48.2 % claimed that television broadcasts did not make them to change their minds from voting for a specific candidate. This means that most of the respondents agreed that they did not change their minds from voting for a specific candidate because of what they saw on television. There is a difference of only 3.8% between those who changed their minds from voting for a particular candidate because of what they saw on television and those who did not change their minds. This is clearly an insignificant marginal difference.

Table 6: television significantly changed respondents' minds To the presidential candidate voted for

RESPONSE	PERCENT
STRONGLY AGREE	22.9
AGREE	24.7
STRONGLY DISAGREE	19.3
DISAGREE	24.8
DON'T KNOW	8.3
TOTAL	**= 100.0**
n	**= 3,064**

Table 6 provides evidence that 47.6% of the respondents chorus that television significantly or in a great and important way changed their minds to the candidates that they voted for. However, as many as 44.1% individuals disagreed. It is therefore clear that most of the respondents shared the opinion that television largely changed their minds to the presidential candidates that they voted for. This means that television

did convert most of the respondents and disagrees with Lazarsfeld, Berelson and Gaudet (1944) assertion of media's low power to convert. In the same vein, the respondents' answers do not agree with Woll and Binstock (1991, p. 473) who found little evidence of the media easily swaying the political attitudes of the public in spite of their perceived power to do so. The practical implication is that political office campaigners may find it profitable using television to continue to reach out to members of the electorate.

CROSS TABULATIONS

Cross tabulations below are presented to create better understanding on the significant inter-relationships between two or more variables.

TABLE 7: AN ACROSS WARD COMPARISON OF RESPONDENTS' CLAIMS TO CHANGING THEIR MINDS AS A RESULT OF TELEVISION

RESPONSES	OTA 1 (%)	SANGO (%)	IJU (%)	ADO ODO II (%)	KETU/ ADIE-OWE (%)	AGBARA 11 (%)
YES	29.3	39.3	31.9	30.7	25.3	40.2
NO	66.7	58.4	66.2	68.3	73.9	59.8
DON'T KNOW	4.0	2.3	1.9	1.0	.8	
TOTAL	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**
n =	396	838	1110	306	245	169

X^2 = 44.939, df = 10, p = 0.000

From Table 7 above, it can be seen that television influenced more respondents from Agbara II and Sango into changing their minds on the contestants they voted for. Respondents from these wards are more exposed to television than the respondents from the more rural wards. A greater number of the respondents from these wards did not change their minds or their decisions on the aspirants that they had made up their minds to vote for, irrespective of what they later watched on television. Thus television broadcasts did not make them to change their minds on the contestants that the voted for.

The Pearson chi-square values indicate a significant relationship between respondents' wards and the respondents agreeing that they changed their

minds from their initial candidate choices. Based on this test, we confirm that television made respondents in the six wards to change their minds from their initial choices of candidates because of the information television gave to them.

Table 8: A Comparison of Respondents' Ward Description And Their Changing Their Minds on Contestants Voted For In The Presidential Election

RESPONSES	RURAL (%)	URBAN (%)	SUBURBAN (%)
YES	29.1	35.9	30.2
NO	70.3	61.6	67.6
DON'T KNOW	.6	2.5	2.2.
TOTAL	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**
n =	698	1842	524
X^2 =	25.496, df = 4, p = 0.000		

Respondents were grouped into rural, urban and suburban voters. Table 8 seeks to establish if these respondents changed their minds from the contestants that they had already made up their minds to vote for after exposure to television broadcasts. Interestingly, few of them did! Just 29.1% and 35.9% and 30.2% of respondents from the rural, urban and suburban areas respectively did change their minds. It is clear that these figures indicate that most of the respondents did not alter their original decisions on the candidates that they had earlier resolved to vote for. Across the different areas, these respondents maintained their stance, even after exposure to television broadcasts, which may be negative.

It can be summarized that television had the least influence on those voters from the rural areas; lesser influence on those from the suburban places; and most influence on those from the urban neighbourhoods in causing any mind change. For political strategists, it might be a wise idea to sustain a television campaign blitz among the urban dwellers. They may also find it profitable to launch a television commercial onslaught at the rural dwellers to force them to shift their positions, especially where their candidates do not enjoy much popularity.

The Pearson chi-square test shows a significant relationship between the description of the respondents wards and these respondents in turn changing their decisions on the contestants that they voted for in the

presidential election. This means that these respondents regardless of their locations - rural, urban or suburban – turned away from their initial candidate preferences. Television broadcasts influenced the respondents in these various locations interested in changing their minds on the contestants that they voted for in the last presidential election.

Table 9: A comparison of respondents' party membership and television Changing their minds on contestants voted for

RESPONSES	PARTY MEMBERSHIP (%)	NON-PARTY MEMBERSHIP (%)
YES	39.8	28.4
NO	58.4	69.4
DON'T KNOW	1.8	2.2
TOTAL	**100.0%**	**100.0%**
n =	1337	1727
X^2 =	43.739, df = 2, p = 0.000	

Table 9 shows that respondents who were party members did not turn away from the contestants that they had decided to vote for during the presidential election despite everything shown by television. There were 58.4% of the party members who did not change their minds on the contestants that they had previously made up their minds to vote for in the election. This opinion is not unexpected. Their political organizations may have reinforced their interest in participation and consequently encouraged them to vote for their candidates. Party members are actively involved in politics. Given that voting is political activity that may keep or bring their parties in power, they were not likely to change their minds on the contestants that they voted for. Another 39.8% of these party members claimed that they changed their minds on the contestants that they had previously decided to vote for. Probably, these are the party members that crossed over to the other parties, felt unhappy with the candidacies of their parties or had other issues of disagreement with their parties. Only 1.8% of them did not know if they had made up their minds or not on the candidates to vote for. In the camp of the non-party members, 69.4% of the respondents did not change their minds about the candidates that they had earlier decided to vote for during the presidential election. A further 28.4% said that they changed their minds from the contestants that they had earlier made up their minds to vote for after

watching electoral programmes on television. They voted for other candidates.

Since most party and non-party members did not change their minds on the contestants that they had earlier decided to vote for, it will be a wise thing for campaign managers to use television to reinforce those elements in the contestant's television campaigns that the respondents appreciated about them.

From the result of the Pearson chi-square test between respondents' party membership and television broadcasts changing these respondents' minds on the contestants that they voted for during the presidential election, we find a significant relationship. In other words, the party membership of the respondents influenced their changing their minds on the contestants that they voted for.

Statistical Test

The Pearson Moment Correlation measures the precise linear association between the dependent and the independent variables. The independent variable is the respondents' exposure to television and dependent variable is their consequent voting behaviour. The level of significance is .000. This means that there is an expected zero error for every 1000 units of sample. This indicates a very low significance level.

The Test explains the relationships existing between respondents' change of mind from the candidates that they had previously made up their minds to vote for during the last election and their exposure to television broadcasts. All the variables have significant and positive correlations. A correlation of 0.202 exists between respondents changing their minds from the candidates that they initially wanted to vote in as the president and what they watched on television making them to change to vote for particular candidates. Similarly, there were coefficients of 0.206; 0.159 and 0.184 respectively for respondents changing their minds to vote for specific candidates because of what they saw on television; changing their minds from voting in their initial choices of candidates to vote for other specific candidates that they did not previously want to vote for; and changing their minds from voting for specific candidates that they had earlier made up their minds to vote for before watching electoral programmes.

Equally, there are correlation coefficients of 0.385; 0.381 and 0.354 between what the respondents watched on television that made them to reverse their decisions to vote for particular candidates; changing their

minds to vote for specific candidates; and changing their minds from voting for specific candidates in the last presidential election. There is a correlation coefficient of 0.395 for respondents changing their minds to vote for specific candidates because of what they saw on television and changing their minds from voting for specific candidates. There is also a coefficient of +. 388 for television significantly changing respondents minds to the candidates that they actually voted for. Lastly, there is a coefficient correlation of 0.329 between respondents changing their minds from voting for specific candidates because of what they saw on television and television significantly changing their minds to the candidates that they actually voted for during the election.

Discussion

Since all the correlation coefficients are positive and significant, it can be concluded that television broadcasts made voters to change their minds from their initial choices of candidates voted for in the presidential election is accepted. Nevertheless, the narration above shows that ten of the correlation values are relatively low having fallen between 0.159 - 0.395. Although these values are positive, but they are not significantly different from 0 and therefore only establish television's weakness in making respondents' change their minds from the candidates that they initially wanted to vote for. In other words, television broadcasts were influential, but this influence was not too strong enough to cause considerable mind changes in the respondents. This means that television broadcasts did sway some voters from their earlier decisions, nonetheless, they were not in the majority. The respondents were actually affected by what television showed about the contestants. These in turn affected the respondents' decisions to vote or not to vote for specific contestants. Television wielded marginal influence.

Political strategists may, therefore, devise more skilful means of employing television to reach the voters. Like O'Cass (2004) has pointed out, an understanding of the nature of the voters' psyche will help political marketers to be better equipped to influence the voters' involvement, satisfaction and ultimately their loyalty. Using the appropriate marketing strategies can create a stable voter markets from the party faithfuls or an unstable one for the opposition. Understanding and using television effectively may likely shift swing voters, the late deciders or non-loyal party members.

Conclusion

This study has established that the media can set public opinion, influence voters' behaviour and indirectly decide electoral outcomes

depending on what television choose to cover or not cover. Democracy is all about people making informed decisions on who will exercise rulership over them. For some of the people to make this informed decision, they need what the media have to offer, especially on the candidates that they may know little or nothing about.

This study also establishes that most voters have already made up their minds on their candidates of preference that they would want to vote for even before any exposure to television broadcasts. These decisions remained fairly stable and unchanged during voting periods. The strongly partisan voters remained committed to the flag bearers of their political parties irrespective of either positive or negative television broadcasts. Television broadcasts reinforced their decisions. Nonetheless, television influenced the decision of some of the voters, especially the urban residents, because what they saw on television influenced the candidates that they voted for. Negative television broadcasts made some of the respondents to change their minds from their initial choices to vote for other candidates. The rural based voters were not so easily influenced by television broadcasts. Their communal lifestyles and extensive families wielded more influence than television broadcasts did.

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